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**Testimony to the Budgeting for Results (BFR) Commission
Regarding the development of the state's BFR Framework
Submitted by Martin Torres, Policy Analyst, Latino Policy Forum
Wednesday, October 12, 2011**

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this committee. My name is Martin Torres and I'm a policy analyst at the Latino Policy Forum. The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago-area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

Over time, the Forum has documented the growth of the Latino population in Illinois, conducted analyses on the state's investment in Latino-led nonprofit organizations, and led efforts to address the disparity between the two.

It is our hope that a more strategic and intentional budgeting framework will ensure that Latino children, families, and workers are fully incorporated into the state's vision for individual self-sufficiency, community well-being, and collective prosperity.

To that end, the Forum has several recommendations for this Commission.

First, it is imperative that the goals and sub-goals associated with the state's desired results are written in a manner that accounts for the state's increasing diversity. For example, reducing the drop-out rate is a laudable goal, but that language doesn't specifically address the gap in high-school completion rates among Latino, African-American, and White students. A revised version of that goal could be stated as follows, "Reduce the drop-out rate and eliminate the disparity in high-school completion rates among Illinois' diverse student population." Regardless of the framing, Illinois must ensure that its goals account for the success of every resident of Illinois.

Second, as efforts are made to evaluate how effective programs are at meeting their intended objectives, data must be disaggregated in order to determine how well programs are serving diverse populations and other variables associated with programs target populations. Measuring participation and enrollment in state-funded programs is particularly important for Latinos given the dramatic growth of this population, the geographic concentrations of that growth, and the proportion of Latinos eligible for services. That data will also signal the degree to which programs are serving the beneficiaries envisioned by the program, which is essential to measuring their overall value to the state.

Lastly, as service providers are asked to collect additional information, evaluate their effectiveness, and justify their funding, state agencies should provide them with access to user-friendly data systems, evaluation tools, and technical assistance where possible. Large, mature nonprofit service providers will have less difficulty adjusting to these tasks than smaller, less experienced providers. It is our hope that more stringent reporting requirements do not have the unintended consequence of pushing some service providers out of the systems they are currently operating in despite the quality of services they may be providing.